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PROGRAM CBS Morning News

STATION WTOP TV
CBS Network

DATE August 30, 1977 7:00 AM

CITY Washington, D. C.

SUBJECT An Interview with Admiral Turner

BRUCE MORTON: Admiral Stansfield Turner is Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. He is also, because of President Carter's reorganization of the intelligence community, a Director who has somewhat more authority than his predecessors did over other intelligence agencies. Admiral Turner is here in our Washington studio this morning with correspondent Fred Graham.

Gentlemen.

FRED GRAHAM: Admiral Turner, the United States Government is preparing to sign a proposed treaty with Panama, which would turn the control of that canal over to the Panamanians by the year 2000. Has the CIA conducted a study as to the safety and advisability of this move?

ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER: That primarily, Fred, is a policy question, and we don't get into policy matters. However, in something like this, it is our responsibility to look at what foreign reaction will be and whether that could be friendly or adverse. And in this case we have looked at that and find that probable reaction of the Latin American countries around Panama would be very favorable.

GRAHAM: Well, now, some of the people who oppose the treaty, though, are afraid that something might happen down the road similar to what happened to the Suez Canal; that the canal, being taken over, would then be used in a discriminatory way or misused. Hasn't the CIA looked into whether that might happen?

ADMIRAL TURNER: No, those are all hypotheses as to policy matters that might or might not happen. We are not here to speculate on those.

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GRAHAM: Now also in the news recently is the question of Soviet -- the Soviet Embassy here in Washington eavesdropping on microwave transmissions used by people using the telephone around Washington and in and out of some of the major cities.

Why hasn't this government used the same sort of microwave bombardment that the Soviets use on our Embassy in Moscow?

ADMIRAL TURNER: There're lots of technical factors involved in this, and there also is the safety of our own people. There's the fact that we are an open and a free society, as opposed to the Soviet Union. But I can assure you that the government has been for some time, and is, doing everything it can to protect the American citizen against this illegal intrusion.

GRAHAM: Such as what?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, we are doing things like moving the communications into areas where they cannot be intercepted, and other things that would be inappropriate to discuss in any detail.

GRAHAM: Well, now, of course there's the question as to whether the Russian bombardment of our Embassy in Moscow has harmed the health of any of our people there. Is it that -- are we worried about the Russian personnel here when they may be endangering the health of our people in Moscow? Why should we be worried about that?

ADMIRAL TURNER: We are not persuaded that the bombardment in Moscow is injurious to the health of our people there.

GRAHAM: And so why don't we do it here?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Because there're lots of technical factors involved here, that the equities of the American people are at stake. And it just is a very complex legal and technical issue. But we're looking into every aspect of protecting American rights, and I'm persuaded that we can and will do that very well.

GRAHAM: Can I just straighten that out? Are you afraid that if we bombard the Embassy here, that some of that might go astray and harm the health of innocent Americans living and working around the Russian Embassy here?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I don't think that's a major consideration, no, because the levels of power required are not that great.

GRAHAM: Then I'm not quite sure that I understand why we're not doing it.

But let me go on to another recent intriguing incident in the news to me. Almost unprecedented to my knowledge, in recent

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days the CIA counterpart in Russia, the KGB, alleged that perhaps a double agent who disappeared in Vienna in December of 1975 was in fact murdered, perhaps, by the CIA.

ADMIRAL TURNER: That's utter nonsense. Utter nonsense.

GRAHAM: Are you denying that now?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Absolutely.

GRAHAM: Well, what happened to that double agent?

ADMIRAL TURNER: That double agent went to Vienna for a proposed rendezvous that the KGB suggested with two KGB officers. He never returned from that rendezvous. One can hypothesize that he defected on his own voluntarily. One can hypothesize that he was abducted. I think the fact that he was last known to be in the company of two KGB officers is very incriminating.

GRAHAM: Why do you think they did this unusual thing about making a public -- a publication in a magazine over in Russia that the CIA might have done that?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think they may be taking a cue from us, Fred. We're taking an attitude now in this country of being more open with our intelligence operations, with our intelligence information. We have tried in the last few months to give the American people more of the information that we obtain and which can be put in an unclassified form. We've tried to take the American people into our confidence more so they understand what we are doing. The cameras of your network, CBS, for instance, were the first ones ever to enter the halls of the CIA, with its "60 Minutes" show. I doubt that the KGB is really doing that, but we're certainly trying this.

GRAHAM: But if the KGB in its version of what you're doing is lying, which you just said they are, how do we know you're not going to lie to us?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Because we have all kinds of oversight procedures in this country. We have a free media, for instance, such as this interrogation that you and I are going through today here. And we intend by our forthrightness, by our openness to show the American people that we are honest and that we are conducting our intelligence operations in ways in which they would be proud.

GRAHAM: Why are you doing this?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Because I believe sincerely that the strength of this country rests with an informed electorate. And if the electorate of this country can benefit by having some of the information that we have and which we can, without harming

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the national security, share with them, we're going to have a better and a stronger country.

GRAHAM: Very quickly, Admiral Turner, some of the friends of former Director Richard Helms are saying that if he is indicted on charges of perjury and other charges, that it could be devastating to our CIA operation and our allies.

Can you comment on that?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes. There's no question that if you prosecute in a case like this, we will have to release certain national security information that will harm the country's interest.

It is my job not to pass judgment on whether that is a worthwhile thing to do or not, but simply to make available to the appropriate authorities what information we would have to release and how important we think it is. From there, a judgment has to be made whether the interests of the country are better served by prosecution, if that were, in fact, the recommendation of the grand jury, or in preserving the information intact.

GRAHAM: Thank you very much, Admiral Stansfield Turner.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Thank you.